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UNDERSTANDING KRASHEN HYPOTHESIS OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A CASE STUDY OF A POLYGLOT

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Abstract

This research focuses on a case of a polyglot. The objectives of the study were to describe how a polyglot acquires the languages related to three of Krashen Hypothesis regarding the acquisition vs learning, affective filter, and natural order hypothesis. The subject of this study was an English teacher who is able to speak many foreign languages or polyglot. The instruments used in the study were observation, an interview and questionnaire. The findings showed that the way he gained all the foreign languages are acquisition in natural setting. In terms of affective filter hypothesis, the result revealed that the affective variables played a facilitative role in her SLA. In this case, the subject showed good characteristics of language learner, such as good language aptitude, high motivation, and cognitive and affective factors. As for the natural order hypothesis, she found it easy to learn new language, since it was relatively similar to her previous learned languages in terms of grammar and structure. However, it is suggested to explore the other two Krashen hypothesis to complete the findings with more samples to get deeper understanding on polyglot phenomena.

Keywords: Krashen hypothesis; acquisition versus learning; affective filter; natural order; SLA; polyglot

Language is the tool to communication. People can have many advantages by being able to speak many languages. Therefore, many people wish to learn other languages after their first language to communicate with people from other parts of the world. However, learning language is not always easy. Ordinary people are struggling to learn new language, even some of them give up and quit learning it before they can say the first sentence. However, interestingly there are some gifted people who are able to master more than two or even much more foreign languages effortlessly. Languages seem to be part of their DNA. Those people are called as multilingual or polyglot who are able to speak in many languages.

In Indonesia, being multilingual actually is common since Indonesia comprises of thousand ethnics with their own distinct languages. But polyglots are more superior and able to speak not only vernaculars but also foreign languages. The phenomena of polyglots surely invite the interest among language teachers, since it might give more insight about their strategies in learning language, that perhaps could be replicated by common people to learn languages easier.

The issue about multilingualism or polyglotism is much related to second language acquisition study. SLA is a process of enormous complexity in which a variety of factors are at work and which evades description and explanation (De Bot, K., Lowie, W., and Verspoor, M,

2005). Some prominent theories about SLA have been acknowledged, but the most familiar are Krashen hypothesis.

There are some theories underpinning this research. Most of them are related to multilingual or polyglot phenomenon and Krashen hypothesis.

Multilingualism and polyglotism

It is largely understood that most communities in whole world are multilingual or at least bilingual, where the people are used to communicate in more than one language as the media. While it is the case that even speaker of a single case (putative monolinguals) control styles and levels of that language, it is very common that people develop some knowledge and ability in a second language and so become bilingual. Spolsky (1998) mentions the simplest definition of a bilingual is a person who has some functional ability in a second language. It might vary from a limited ability in one more domain, to very strong command of both languages (also called as balanced bilingualism).

According to Ellis (1994) many learners are multilingual in the sense that in addition to their first language they have acquired some competence in more than one non-primary language. Vivian Cook in Cook and Bassetti (2010) has calls these people multi-competent or multilingual and also recognized as polyglot.

Further, in term of the way a bilingual learns the language, Weinrich cited in Klein (1986) identified three kinds of bilingualism with reference to the structuring of the vocabulary as follow:

1. Compound bilingualism (two languages are being learned in parallel).
2. Coordinate bilingualism (first language has been acquired when learned the new language)
3. Subordinate bilingualism (referring the first language in order to access the new language).

Individual learner differences is a undeniable fact that there are some people who are struggling even only to master one foreign language, while some other can master many languages so easily. It leads the experts to the conclusion that there are some individual learners play significant role on it. Sekhan (1989) in Ellis (1996) defines four learners differences in learning a second language as follow:

1. Language aptitude
2. Motivation
3. Language learning strategies
4. Cognitive and affective factors such as, extroversion-introversion, risk-taking, intelligence, field independence and anxiety.

Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition

Stephen Krashen (University of Southern California) is an expert in the field of linguistics, specializing in theories of language acquisition and development. Much of his recent research has involved the study of non-English and bilingual language acquisition. Since 1980, he has published well over 100 books and articles and has been invited to deliver over 300 lectures at universities throughout the United States and Canada.

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition consists of five main hypotheses:

- The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis;
- The Monitor hypothesis;
- The Input hypothesis;
- And the Affective Filter hypothesis;
- The Natural Order hypothesis.

This study however only focuses on three of five Krashen hypothesis including the acquisition versus learning, the affective filter, and natural order hypothesis.

The Acquisition-Learning distinction is the most fundamental of the five hypotheses in Krashen's theory and the most widely known among linguists and language teachers. According to Krashen there are two independent systems of foreign language performance: 'the acquired system' and 'the learned system'. The 'acquired system' or 'acquisition' is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concentrated not in the form of their utterances, but in the communicative act.

The "learned system" or "learning" is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge 'about' the language, for example knowledge of grammar rules. A deductive approach in a teacher-centred setting produces "learning", while an inductive approach in a student-centred setting leads to "acquisition".

The Affective Filter hypothesis embodies Krashen's view that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence, anxiety and personality traits. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, a low level of anxiety and extroversion are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, anxiety, introversion and inhibition can raise the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition. On the other hand, positive affect is necessary, but not sufficient on its own, for acquisition to take place.

Finally, not the less important Natural Order hypothesis is based on research findings (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Makino, 1980 cited in Krashen, 1987) which suggested that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a 'natural order' which is predictable. For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early while others late. This order seemed to be independent of the learners' age, L1 background, conditions of exposure, and although the agreement between individual acquirers was not always 100% in the studies, there were statistically significant similarities that reinforced the existence of a Natural Order of language acquisition. Krashen however points out that the implication of the natural order hypothesis is not that a language program syllabus should be based on the order found in the studies. In fact, he rejects grammatical sequencing when the goal is language acquisition.

Many researches have been conducted to explore the phenomena of multilingual or polyglot. In 2023, Leas was able to find some 'remarkable' instances of polyglottery in the ancient sources. Obviously, some similarities can be observed. But for more than one reason, ancient polyglots, or rather ancient views on polyglots, strike us as different. The rarity of the phenomenon in a society in which multilingualism was a current feature forces us to think about vital issues such as the valuation of language and communication, ethnocentricity and imperialism, as well as the link between character and language.

In the field of SLA, Cook (1995) proposed that L2 users are fundamentally different from L1 users and should be examined in their own right. Because of the presence of more than one language in their repertoire, Cook argued that "second language users" develop a complex type of competence, which is qualitatively different from the competence of monolingual speakers of a language (Cook 1992).

A more intense mixing of people naturally leads to a more intense mixing of languages. As such, we currently speak about the so-called multicultural society, a concept that has been gaining more and more attention. This of course is due to mutual interference of individual languages, particularly influencing the strong language by the not so strong language. Multilingualism has thus gradually become a natural trend in our globalized world and has probably been included as a natural part of social development among the logical circumstances (Malechová, 2016).

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the polyglot phenomena especially the process of how a polyglot in acquiring, comprehending and producing the new language related to Krashen hypothesis on second language acquisition, especially the acquisition versus learning, affective filter, and natural order hypothesis.

METHOD

Regarding the burning issue about the polyglotism that needs an in-depth investigation, this research applied case study design. It is chosen because they are different from other types in that they are intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time (Cresswell, 1998). Topics often examined in case studies include individuals, events, or groups. Through case studies, researchers hope to gain in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved. Merriam (2001) suggests that insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, procedures, and future research. It also has the potential to provide an in-depth understanding of process rather than outcome (Hood, 2009, p.2). In this case, researcher tried to capture a detailed picture of a polyglot, the process she acquires the languages related to Krashen hypothesis through analysis of the data gained from in depth interview and some questionnaires. This type of study is called as explorative case study (Nunan and Bailey, 2009, p. 195).

The research was conducted in Jakarta. The object of the research was an English teacher who is able to speak five languages. The data were gained from several sources including observation, questionnaires (adapted from Attitude/Motivation Test Battery/AMTB of Garder, 2004), and an in-depth interview with the subject. To ensure the internal validity triangulation was conducted (Yin 2003). The data analysis was conducted during and after the research (Alwasilah, 2009). It was to get a deeper understanding on the polyglot phenomena.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After examining, analysing and interpreting the data, there are some facts reveal from this research as it is explicated below:

From the observation and interview there are some interesting findings regarding the acquisition versus learning hypothesis. In this research, it is found that the subject acquired her L2 in this case English at the first grade of elementary school or before her puberty. From the interview, the subject admitted that she speak English as her L2 since she moved to the USA following her parents to live there. She acquired English at home, school, and environment. She also explained that she gained her English mostly at home and from her friends while they were playing at the field. During her stay in the USA, she also learned several languages at school, Italian and French. She also spoke in Italian to her friends.

Later, subject acquired German while her travel to Europe. She lived there for 1 year and had to communicate in German since everybody spoke German. At the first time of her staying, she still used English most of the time and picked up new words in German while communicating, and after 3 months he could communicate in German.

However, from all the foreign languages he acquired, English is the only language he could speak, write, read and listen equally well. The other languages, she only can speak. Subject confirmed that learning to write needs more time than learning to speak in foreign language.

While learning some other languages, subject also relied on English to comprehend the new language, until she acquired the new language quite fluently. But she always started using the new language straightforward after she had contact with the native speaker of each foreign language. In addition, she needed around three to four months to comprehend the new language.

As it is explained that subject used English most of the time as the bridging language while learning a new one inspite of the fact that his first language is Indonesia. Subject is considered to

experience parsing or language attrition. Her L1 is no longer dominant in her main system. English becomes more superior and becomes his daily languages, including in note taking and learning new things.

The other theory that can be proved is that the contact with the language is also crucial in language learning. After English, Italian became the next language that subject acquired better than other foreign languages, because she spent more time and had longer contact with Italian.

However, it gives us hint that by learning a major language like English, as the world's lingua franca, it would help learner to acquire other foreign languages. By acquiring English first, learner will have a communication device with other foreigner and get a better chance to learn new languages. Further, by acquiring a foreign language, at least learner has an experience in learning new language and generates certain steps he might follow later when learning another language.

However, the fact that subject mostly learns the languages in non formal setting, it gives the hint that learning language is best by having direct contact with the native speakers. Formal education might give well-structured lessons but it rarely gives chances to try out the language. In other words, acquisition is also applicable in second or third language. It also somehow gives faster result on language learner fluency.

The Affective filter hypothesis

The Affective Filter hypothesis embodies Krashen's view that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence, anxiety and personality traits. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, a low level of anxiety and extroversion are better equipped for success in second language acquisition.

Referring to Skehan (1986) about the characteristics of good language learners mostly can be found at the subject. He had a very good aptitude to language. He always wants to learn new language and has no fear to use and communicate in new language even he could not speak too well. He said the best way to learn the language is by practicing it. In his words are to speak the language first and later speak the language properly.

The result of the questionnaire adapted from Gardner AMTB (2004) showed that her motivation to learn second language is very high as it can be seen in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Interest and Motivation to Learn Second Language

| No. | Item | Percentage |
|-----|------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Interest in foreign language (IFL) | 83 % |
| 2. | Motivation Intensity (MI) | 89 % |

The subject's motivation to learn language is also high. In her first months of her staying, she had problem to communicate but she has no choice that to learn the language to mingle with her friends. This external motivation plays very important role in acquiring English and other languages she speaks now.

From the interview, subject admitted that she preferred to listen and picked up some new words in new languages. It confirms the questionnaires about learning strategies that subject is categorized as an audiolingual learner. It doesn't mean that audiolingual learner would be better in learning language, but for her case, her strategy to listen mostly is effective.

The cognitive and affective factors also influence the success of learning new language. As it is stated in the finding that subject is left-brained, it confirms the theory that language function is handled by human left-brain. Subject superiority in language might be influenced by this fact. It is

also supported by her extroverted personality. Whenever subject meets new people, subject always keeps talking. Subject can be considered as risk-taker, because subject never feels afraid to try out the new language even in improper and simplest form.

The result of brain lateralization test showed that subject is left brained. Her left brain is more superior than her right brain. From the finding above there are some theories about language learning that being confirmed. English as the second language he acquired before puberty can reach the highest level of fluency compared to other foreign languages she acquired after puberty. As we know that critical period would end after puberty, therefore learner will be benefitted especially in pronunciation, if they learn the language before the puberty.

Natural Order hypothesis suggested that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a 'natural order' which is predictable. Krashen however points out that the implication of the natural order hypothesis is not that a language program syllabus should be based on the order found in the studies. In fact, he rejects grammatical sequencing when the goal is language acquisition.

After she acquires English as her L2 and surfaces her L1, later she used English as her basic in learning new languages. She mentioned that she found it easy to learn other languages in this case Italian, French, and German, since they have predictable grammatical structures and somehow, she just innately comprehends them. Perhaps, her experience in learning a language previously facilitate her to learn new language.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings and discussions previously, there are some conclusions that can be drawn. Firstly, acquisition process also applicable to second, third and so on forth language. The natural setting offers the learner more relaxed and make sense environment to pick new languages. It also gives chance to develop native like pronunciation to the learners since she had more frequent contact with the native speakers.

Secondly, for the affective filter hypothesis, it is also proven that the affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence, anxiety and personality traits play important role in the success of a second language learners. With her high motivation, self-confidence, low anxiety, and extroverted personality, she managed to learn foreign languages successfully.

Finally, for the natural order hypothesis, the study shows that she got advantages from her experience in learning previous language while learning new language, since the grammar is almost similar. Therefore, it is easy for her to keep up with the new language.

Based on the findings and conclusions on this research, there are the recommendations for further research. First, the limited time of this mini-research is considered as the main constraint, therefore further researches on this topic should provide longer time. Ethnography or grounded theory research might be suitable to gain deeper results. Last, the subject of this research is also very limited, therefore it is hard to generalize the phenomena that is being observed. Therefore, it would be beneficial to add more subjects.

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